

XMAS IN NEW YORK, SANTA WITH A GUN

DEAR GEORGE—Something hates me there, hates you
Hates everything. And is always
Shooting things. And they all fall down, loudly
Or softly, and disappear. And then
Come back, and are there, and are shot again.
The buildings, the cats, dogs, the pigeons
Indians—the sun, moon, all the flags
The things in Klein's, in Sak's, Macy's. They
All fall down. Like they were never there.

And Santa Claus, the Store Detective
... caught me, George. I was only stealing
Toys, an erection set, a small train
(dead things, things that'd already been shot
Things on the verge of disappearing).
Thief! thief!! he started shooting at me.
But I got away.

Everything
Was falling down, was hating me. —George,
Why is it like that there?

Santa Claus!

All the little kids were crying. BANG
His .38 police pistol, BANG!!
The mothers chasing me, the fathers
Aunts & uncles, TV-antennas
Elevateds, statues, all the flags
The United Nations—Russia, Israel
Pakistan...

I took a taxi. *Yes,*
I like you, said the hack. But we fell
Off the Brooklyn Bridge; and drowned. The East
River laughed. And then the Bridge fell down,
The Indians, and the sky fell down;
And God tried to, hard, but couldn't;
And cried. And people wanted to jump,
And couldn't —where's the Bridge? where's the sky?
Where's God? *Where were they ever!* I screamed.
SANTA CLAUS—he was up there shooting
At me. And he killed me, George, he killed me
Three times, four times... and knew that I had drowned.

Robert S. Sward